United Nations A/HRC/28/NGO/50

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 February 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Twenty-eighth session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-03056

1503056

Please recycle

The relevance of social protection floors

The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII welcomes the Secretary General's Report A/HRC/28/35 on the question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights, submitted at the 28th regular session of the Human Rights Council pursuant to Human Rights resolution 25/11. The report focuses on the importance of social protection floors for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

As written in the ILO *World Social Protection Report 2014/2015*,[1] seventy three per cent of the global population are either not covered, or only partially covered, by comprehensive social security systems.

In the current economic crises, the number of people that live without social security is increasing in developed countries too. The actual economic ruling system creates a big gap between the rich and the poor. The first ones become less but richer, the poor are on increase. Economic inequalities create new disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

The CESCR General Comment n.19 states, "*It is important that social security schemes cover disadvantaged and marginalized groups, even where there is limited capacity to finance social security.*"[2] This limited capacity could be removed by redistributing government's expenditures. An example may be reducing the military costs and redirect the saving towards development, health and education.

Public services can turn out to be a good economic equalizer and shock absorber of the imbalances in the income distribution. However, this will depend on how they are structured, granted and supplied. Unfortunately, political choices penalize in most cases the poor people, in favour of the rich elites. This contributes further to exacerbate the existing economic disparities.

We would like to emphasize the importance of paying attention to the social protection floor initiative, as underlined by the Secretary-General, because such an intervention could be instrumental in achieving the minimum core content of the economic, social rights. Social protection can prevent people from falling into extreme poverty by helping them cope with different risks, shocks and crises beyond their control[3].
The States should develop rules that redistribute the riches of the country and ensure a minimum core content of the right to social security and health.

Clearly, the principles behind the social protection floor have to be transparency, participation and accountability. These principles are also indicated in the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty[4] approved by the General Assembly.

States have to elaborate integrated strategies for essential social services and income security for all, based on the shared principle of social justice. The benefits of such a system have to be adequate in amount and duration. In this way, States not only will prevent and reduce poverty, inequality, social exclusion and social insecurity but also will promote equal opportunities for all.

The report of the Secretary-General clearly states that the objective of the social protection floor is to safeguard dignified existence for all; such an affirmation based on the principle of human dignity reveals the direct link between social security system and human rights.

As Pope Francis affirms: "*The scandal of poverty cannot be addressed by promoting strategies of containment that only tranquilize the poor and render them tame and inoffensive. How sad it is when we find, behind allegedly altruistic*

---

[1] *World Social Protection Report 2014/2015: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice* (2014). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_245201.pdf.

[2] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Comment No.19. The right to social security (art.9)

[3] A/HRC/15/41 Report of the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, on the draft guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights.

[4] A/RES/67/164

works, the other being reduced to passivity or being negated; or worse still, we find hidden personal agendas or commercial interests."[5] He also prophetically says: "*this society is the result of an underlying social choice in favour of an economic system that puts profit above man. If economic profit takes precedence over the individual and over humanity, we find a throw-away culture at work that considers humanity in itself, human beings, as a consumer good, which can be used and then thrown away*".

In our opinion, the most important domains for social protection are health (related with food, safe drinking water and sanitation, etc.) and education. Those States that do not ensure health for all, fail to recognize the human dignity of their people. Those States that don't ensure a quality free education to children and youth impede their own development since they denies to themselves the opportunity to discover all the potentialities of their people. Unfortunately, we are living in a world where money seems to dictate on who and how people have access to education and health. To invest in health and education are ways to reduce the inequality between the poor and the rich, to create a world that can develop harmoniously and respects human dignity.

It is urgent and necessary to implement the Right to Development that provides an integrated, holistic and cohesive normative framework for achieving a just and equitable development for individuals and all people. In fact, Right to Development encompasses both the civil and political and the economic, social and cultural dimensions of human rights and addresses both the national and international dimensions of development.

To empower people, States should start from implementing the Right to Development. In this regard, social protection floors may be a relevant sub-criterion[6] for the implementation of Right to Development.

States should implement article 2, paragraph 1 of the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights that recognizes the assistance and international cooperation between States as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report: "*social security system and their components should be universal, based on social solidarity.*"

The Economic and Social Council also recognizes the importance of international cooperation in its overview entitled "*World Economic and Social Survey 2014: Reducing Inequality for Sustainable Development*": "*There is an international dimension to domestic or national inequalities. While inequalities within countries are mainly the domain of national Governments, there are several instances where global rules, or the lack thereof, may enhance those inequalities or constrain government action at the national level to reduce them. For instance, initiatives to promote internationally agreed minimum social standards in developing countries are supported by financial and technical resources provided by international cooperation.*"

However, international assistance and cooperation should not impose conditions that would hinder the exercise and enjoyment by peoples and individuals of their human rights. As rightly pointed out by Ms. Virgina Dandan, the Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity, in the proposed draft declaration on the right of peoples and individuals to international solidarity[7], cooperation should be a solidarity cooperation based on equal partnerships, mutual commitments and obligations, including mutual accountability enhanced through transparency in the use of development resources obtained through international cooperation, and joint assessment of mutual progress.

Finally, Member States should make use of the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty, that are a practical tool for policy-makers to ensure that public policies (including poverty eradication efforts) reach the poorest members of society, respect and uphold their rights, and take into account the significant social, cultural, economic and structural obstacles to human rights enjoyment faced by persons living in poverty.

---

[5] Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the world meeting of popular movements available from http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents

[6] A/HRC/15/WG.2/TF/2/Add.2: The right to development criteria and operational sub-criteria

[7] A/HRC/26/34, annex.